

Comments on Fifty Shades given by Censor for a Day students

We called for a show of hands at each event as to who had watched the film(s) and who did so under the age of 18. Many hands raised. A few came to talk with us afterward.

David spoke with 5 or 6 16 year old female students in Wellington...

Only one clearly identified as having seen the original 50Shades movie. She had seen it at least a couple of years ago, and thought R18 was too high a rating, she felt the film was “nothing, had very little in it”.

At least two others (unclear whether they had seen it) felt that R18 probably was justified, as at 16, they were just learning about the ‘basics’ of sex, and that subjects such as S&M, bondage etc should be left until they were a little older.

Having said that, all of these students seemed to be very familiar with concepts such as S&M, and comfortable talking about them. A significant amount of the discussion focussed on consent, and the importance for media portrayals to be clear about their treatment of consent in relationships.

Kim spoke with a group of girls from Hutt High. They said they could understand why the film got R18 but they themselves were fine having seen it underage. One girl said something to the effect of “At 16 we’re exploring sex, and BDSM is just the next thing”

Kim spoke with a 17yo boy in Hamilton. He’d sought the first film out at age 15 because of the hype. Said he was ‘unfazed’ by it – he expected it to be much stronger and said ‘people were let down’ (because it didn’t live up to the hype). Would himself rate it R15.

Felt teens are media savvy and if they can’t get in to a cinema they will pirate a film online. Despite this he believes classifications are still a good idea as they give useful indications – mentioned that the R16/R18 ratings help YP choose what to watch.

“By 13 I’m OK”. “Media hardens us up”.

“Sex is everywhere” (in media, entertainment, online porn). “It’s second nature”.

When I asked if BDSM was common knowledge he said, “strap-ons are a joke” (K didn’t delve any deeper as not appropriate)

Mentioned that “peer pressure is a big deal! Kids are scared of their peers and will follow more dominant friends who are trying to stay relevant and be cool”

Kim spoke with a few girls from Pukekohe High in South Auckland. They all felt R16 was appropriate, that 16yo would be capable of handling the film’s content